

The Current Program for an Intelligence Literature

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by The Editors

WE agree with the basic ideas set forth by Mr. Kent. We agree that there is a need for a written literature of intelligence theory and methods; that this literature should attempt to define, criticize, and improve on the "first principles" of intelligence; and that this literature can only be written by experienced officers, presenting their own personal views. This monograph series, Studies in Intelligence, is a first modest attempt to meet these needs.

We will, from time to time, publish articles that seem to us to carry forward the purposes that Mr. Kent has attributed to a professional literature. Some articles will deal with methods of analysis and operations, some with critical definitions, some with problems of organization, and some with the special contribution of particular disciplines to the intelligence effort. Taken all together, we hope, these studies may get us started on the systematic examination of basic intelligence theory and methods.

It is hard to pin down precisely what we mean by basic theory, but we can identify its services to the intelligence effort and the way it gets formulated. By theory we mean that body of hypotheses that guides the intelligence officer in his day-to-day practical activities, that lends some consistency to these activities and gives him a basis for measuring how he is doing on his job. Mr. Kent calls this body of hypotheses "first principles" and says that with them as a basis, the intelligence

community makes best use of its experience and develops professional expertness. Such first principles are not rigid; they are always subject to change or, at least, refinement; and they are built up - or have been, by the academic disciplines - through a process of cumulative individual contributions by members of the profession. It is just this building process that we want to stimulate.

What, then, is the practical upshot of this? First, the Office of Training will act as sponsor only. Our job will be that of generating interest in the program, getting studies written, exploiting some studies that already exist in personal and office files, exercising and coordinating editorial judgment, and finally providing the publication medium for contributions to this literature. Second, the studies will in every case be the contributions of identified Agency officers (sometimes we will have to use pseudonyms, for security reasons, but the general rule will remain the same) and will represent only their own best views. And third, these views will in no case be put forward as Agency or Office of Training doctrine. Naturally, we will be responsible for the good sense and factual accuracy of what we publish, but not for the substance of the arguments and criticisms and opinions expressed. We will operate on the premise that the enterprise is worth doing but that its quality will depend entirely on the interest of Agency people - and on their personal contributions.

Background and Charter

Over the past seven or eight years, there have been any number of suggestions for "professionalizing" the intelligence business - including everything from a trade journal to a graduate school of intelligence. Common to all of them, though, has been some such major premise as the one that Mr. Kent so persuasively states above, that intelligence will come of age as a profession only if it recaptures its experience and the refinements of its methods in a permanent literature. In September 1954, the Director of Training convened a group of senior Agency officers to consider how best to go about the job. This monograph series is a direct result of last year's discussion.

There are, the conferees agreed, two quite different sorts of intelligence literature. One comprises overt material which, whatever its stated

purpose, in effect contributes to our thinking about intelligence and its methodology. Some of this material is, in fact, avowedly about intelligence - in the bulk of cases about clandestine operations. But there is still more overt literature which can sometimes be studied with profit by intelligence officers - books, for example, about social science methodology or about national policy-making processes. Most issues of our Studies in Intelligence, therefore, will have a bibliographic section, devoted to spotting and reviewing some of this material. Occasionally an entire study will be given over to a collective discussion and critique of a whole bloc of overt material - as, for example, a study now being written for us on the current state of social science methodology, with the emphasis on science, and its possible relevance to the intelligence process.

The second major category of intelligence literature is what we are primarily concerned with. This is the material that can only be prepared by experienced intelligence officers and will usually be classified because of references to the mission and product of the intelligence community. Many officers have formulated, even though vaguely, certain principles or methods drawn from their experience in dealing with a succession of problems or cases. Or, conversely, they have come to feel that their experience challenges the validity of a commonly-held concept. These ideas occasionally become the subject of an office memorandum or get discussed informally; more often they simply evaporate in the heat of current business. In any event, they are not carefully thought through and then presented for the enlightenment and serious consideration of interested associates. We hope that the Studies series will provide a vehicle through which such experienced officers can systematically speak their minds.

Organization and Procedure

Our current procedure for obtaining contributions to the series is simply to encourage various Agency officers to prepare studies about the problems in which they are especially expert, which they deal with continuously in their work, and which they think are so fundamental to so much of the business of intelligence as to be appropriate subjects for a basic literature. Thus, when we wanted an article on "capabilities"

analysis in the estimative process, we turned to Abbot Smith of the Office of National Estimates - whose study, by the way, will appear soon in this series.

When a study arrives at our desk, we first send it out to a number of other men whose experience qualifies them as critics and advisers, and ask: Is this piece worth publishing? Should it be revised? If so, precisely how? After the advice and criticism is in, however, it is up to the author to decide what he wants to sign his name to; and it is up to us to decide whether to publish at all.

When we send out articles for comment, we are certainly not seeking "coordination." We will be happy enough if our preliminary readers will agree that the author's point of view is sound and knowledgeable; we surely do not count on agreement about substance. Nor do we imagine that one article will necessarily exhaust a subject. When we can predict that a subject will clearly break down into two or more conflicting points of view, we will try to find representatives of each and publish a symposium. Usually, though, we will depend on reader-reactions, in the form of letters to the editor (which will be published) and suggestions for further studies. To borrow again from Mr. Kent's terminology: we will never avoid debate but concentrate on keeping it "elevated."

Our dependence on soliciting studies is, we hope, only temporary. If the project is worth anything, one proof will presumably be the amount of interest it arouses - and the number of unsolicited suggestions received. The address is 2204 Alcott Hall; or call C. M. Lichenstein at ext. 2428. We welcome comments on the first studies, and prospectuses for more.

What We Will and Will Not Publish

To be more specific about our publication program, these are some of the studies now underway, all of which should appear before the year is out:

- "Capabilities" in National Intelligence Estimates
- The Nature and Role of Economic Intelligence - and Some of its Methods of Analysis

- The Scientific Method and the Intelligence Process
- Administration in Intelligence
- Theory of Indicators - and a Case Study
- "Readability" in Intelligence Publications

Scanning this list, one will see that we are not in the substantive intelligence business; we are not competing with any producing Agency office; indeed, we will not publish finished intelligence at all.

On the contrary, we want to publish studies that could not possibly appear as finished intelligence analysis or as operational support under official Agency auspices (but might be prepared as preliminary, methodological working papers); studies that deal with the way an intelligence officer does his job, with the techniques and methods he uses. To each proposal we will apply the criterion: will this paper contribute to the professional theoretic literature, as best it can be defined? Rather than prepare a list of possible study topics, then, we want to review each prospectus or manuscript that reaches us against this criterion.

After we have been publishing for a time, we hope that our own experience and the criticism of many readers will have sharpened understanding of the exact nature of this basic literature and how best to get it written. Certainly the substance of the publications and our own operating procedures are equally subject to change for the better - and, in both cases, the major share of the burden seems to us to be on the people who have made intelligence a respected profession.

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